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ABSTRACT

As a result of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, new local institutions--youth councils--will assume responsibility for coordinating school-to-work with other youth programming and other labor force development planning and policies. They will also have responsibility for allocating resources for each labor market region. The National Youth Employment Coalition has recommended that individuals interested in influencing local WIA youth program implementation take the following steps: (1) encourage local elected officials to appoint individuals well-versed in youth employment/youth development to the local workforce investment board; (2) encourage a full range of key stakeholders to participate on the youth council, including K-12 and postsecondary education entities; (3) build broad-based local coalitions from the bottom up; and (4) encourage development of youth councils that embrace a mission that includes youth employment/youth development system building rather than just the dispensing of WIA formula funds. The Philadelphia and San Diego youth councils and the Middle Rio Grande Business and Education Collaborative, which serves as the local workforce investment board and youth council of a four-county region in and around Albuquerque, New Mexico, illustrate the potential of youth councils to foster more coherent local youth policy and planning efforts. (MN)

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School-to-Work Intermediary Project

Issue Brief
November 1999

Jobs for the Future

and

New Ways Workers National

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SCHOOL-TO-WORK INTERMEDIARY PROJECT

NOVEMBER 1999

Partners
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Bay Area School-to-Career Action Network

Boston Private Industry Council

Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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ISSUE BRIEF

SCHOOL-TO-WORK PARTNERSHIPS AND YOUTH COUNCILS

By Robert Fleegler, Jobs for the Future

As a result of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, new local institutions—Youth Councils—will plan, coordinate, and oversee youth programs and services funded under the legislation. Councils will be part of the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), also mandated by the act, that will coordinate policy and allocate resources for each labor market region.

How should school-to-work partnerships and Youth Councils relate to one another? This brief assesses their varied options and opportunities and describes the strategies that three local school-to-work partnerships are pursuing to work and coordinate with their local Youth Councils.

Youth Councils have the potential to foster more coherent local youth policy and planning efforts. At a minimum, they must advise the boards on issues related to young people. Yet a more ambitious role is possible: a council could decide to be a catalyst and architect for local youth service delivery systems that go beyond the limits of the federal workforce legislation. In either case, Youth Councils present both opportunities and challenges to school-to-work advisory and planning bodies and to local organizations that convene and connect schools, employers, and other community partners.

Local school-to-work partnerships and the emerging Youth Councils must work out their relationships soon, if they haven't already. WIA allows states to begin implementation in either July 1999 or July 2000. Only nine states received approval from the U.S. Department of Labor to begin implementation in July 1999 (Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin). All the other states must submit plans for a July 2000 implementation launch. To meet Department of Labor deadlines, most states will demand that local plans for Workforce Boards and Youth Councils be finalized and submitted between January and March.

An Overview of the Workforce Investment Act and Youth Councils

Under the Workforce Investment Act, each state will create a state-level Workforce Investment Board, as well as Local Workforce Investment Boards for each labor market region. Local boards are responsible under the act for planning the workforce investment system, including plans for one-stop career center systems (primarily serving adults). Local boards will also certify one-stop providers and identify eligible providers of

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Four Things You Can Do Now to Influence Local WIA Youth Program Implementation

The National Youth Employment Coalition (www.nyec.org) suggests the following priorities for organizations trying to influence the implementation of local Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils.

1. Encourage local elected officials to appoint individuals to the local Workforce Investment Board and the local Youth Council who are well-versed in youth employment/youth development.
2. Encourage the full range of key stakeholders to participate on the Youth Council, including K-12 and postsecondary education entities, employers, community-based organizations, and youth-serving organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters).
3. Build broad-based local coalitions from the bottom up to ensure that the Youth Council is empowered by local elected officials and the Workforce Investment Board.
4. Encourage the development of Youth Councils that embrace a mission that includes youth employment/youth development system-building, not merely the dispensing of WIA formula funds. Youth Council planning should include mapping of the full range of a community's youth service and education needs and resources.

training services. Chief local elected officials appoint the local boards, which must have a majority of business members, one of whom serves as the board chair. The act also mandates representation from local education entities, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and economic development agencies.

The membership of a Youth Council is a subset of the Local WIB and must include representation from: youth service agencies, public housing authorities, parents of eligible youth, individuals with experience with youth activities, Job Corps, and others as appropriate. The Youth Council will develop the portions of the local WIA plan that address the priorities and allocation of the act's youth funding. The council will also recommend youth providers, award grants, and oversee and coordinate youth activities, all subject to the WIB's approval.

A Youth Council could choose simply to fulfill the legal requirement to advise the WIB on youth issues. In this capacity, the council would help the local workforce board establish linkages with other organizations serving youth in the area and advise the board on a broad range of issues relevant to the labor market success of disadvantaged young people.

However, a Youth Council could choose to pursue a more ambitious–and potentially more effective–course. The Youth Council could become a broad youth policy body for the local area. Jim Callahan and Marion Pines of the Sar Levitan Center at Johns Hopkins University, who advocate this broader role, write, "WIA presents an opportunity–perhaps one of the last opportunities we will have in the foreseeable future–to change the way the federal resources are used at the local level. Simply continuing old patterns because other issues may preempt a full consideration of options would be a lost opportunity. Delegating the responsibility to the Youth Councils to make youth policy decisions is a means for avoiding that mistake."[1]

School-to-Career Partnerships and Youth Councils

Clearly, Youth Councils alter the landscape for helping youth succeed in the economy and society. Under the 1994 School To Work Opportunities Act (STWOA), over 1,300 state and local school-to-work partnerships were created to plan and oversee initiatives and expenditures connecting schools with community and workplace learning. The Youth Councils mandated in the 1998 Workforce Investment Act add a new local planning board that has duties

3.

Philadelphia: The Partnership Becomes the Youth Council

As the Workforce Investment Act took shape in Congress, the members of Philadelphia's School-to-Career Leadership Council, the city's local partnership, noted that the proposed Youth Councils bore a strong resemblance to their own group, particularly regarding mandate and membership. With WIA's enactment, the Leadership Council decided to re-establish itself as Philadelphia's Youth Council.

From its beginning, Philadelphia's school-to-work program has been linked to the city's effort to raise academic achievement for all students. As a result, the new Youth Council plans to design and promote a broad youth development system and to maintain close connections with the Philadelphia schools. "Although the Youth Council of Philadelphia is in the very early stages of development," note Callahan and Pines, "there exists a clear vision and mission that extends beyond the legislative scope of work and ensures the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated youth development strategy designed to most effectively serve the City's young people."[4]

The Philadelphia Youth Council plans to align WIA performance indicators with the school district's academic standards, and its membership, including representatives from all major youth-serving agencies in Philadelphia, reflects the breadth and ambition of the lead parties' vision. The council will be staffed by the Philadelphia Youth Network, which was established in 1999 by the city's school-to-work partners. The Youth Network will be headed by the executive director of the School District of Philadelphia's Office for Education and Employment, which is responsible for school-to-work, Perkins Act, adult education, and related programs. This direct linkage between the network and the council will ensure that Philadelphia's school-to-work emphasis on standards-based performance indicators, youth development initiatives, and community-building will continue under the Youth Council and WIA. The Youth Council has applied for 501(c)(3) status as a nonprofit organization in order to supplement WIA funding with private and other resources.

For more information: *Philadelphia Youth Council, c/o Philadelphia Youth Network, Inc., J.F. Kennedy Center, 734 Schuylkill Ave., Room 68, Philadelphia, PA 19146; attn: Mary Jane Clancy (215)875-4899 or Melissa Orner (215)875-3823; mjorner@phila.k12.pa.us*

and responsibilities—and membership—that relate to, but differ distinctly from, those of existing school-to-work partnerships.

Youth Councils provide a vehicle for linking school-to-work planning with that of other youth programming, particularly for out-of-school youth.[2] At the same time, though, Youth Councils and school-to-work partnerships might find themselves in competition. For example, they might seek to recruit active members from the same pool of employers. WIA does not mandate business representation on Youth Councils, yet employers are likely to be asked to participate and play leadership roles.

Moreover, WIA youth funding targets low-income individuals age 14–21 who meet any of six specified employment barriers. Youth Councils may find it difficult to integrate this priority on serving disadvantaged youth with STWOA directives to serve *all* students. During the drafting of WIA, school-to-work was a major topic of debate. However, the final legislation does allow[3] the use of WIA funds to support school-to-work activities for youth who meet WIA-eligibility criteria.

"WIA presents an opportunity—perhaps one of the last opportunities we will have in the foreseeable future—to change the way the federal resources are used at the local level."

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San Diego: The Partnership Folds into the Youth Council

The passage of WIA has provided opportunities for self-assessment by local entities working to improve youth and adult workforce preparation. Many participants in the San Diego School-to-Career Partnership felt that while their organization had achieved some important goals, it had been less successful than they had hoped. A different entity, they decided, might build on the successes and lessons of the first partnership and become more effective in influencing youth policy and programs.

The San Diego School-to-Career Partnership did not feel it should become the local Youth Council. In July 1999, facing a September end to its federal school-to-work grants, the partnership's executive committee voted unanimously to fold itself into the Youth Council that was being created. Five members of the partnership's board are transitioning onto the Youth Council, which will have broader membership than the partnership, including seven members of the Workforce Investment Board, local superintendents, and a variety of business leaders and local entrepreneurs.

The San Diego Youth Council has ambitious plans for creating a broad and coordinated youth development system. It sees its mission as creating a "county-wide workforce development system for youth," according to the partnership's Director of Youth Programs, Marion Paul. To achieve its goals, the council plans to tap the experience and expertise of both traditional programs serving out-of-school youth and the range of local institutions that educate, train, and support young people, including community colleges and the Business Roundtable for Education. The council will oversee and promote many strategies that have their roots in school-to-work, such as job shadowing, career fairs, and internships, and it has made a commitment to closely linking youth programs with the adult education and training systems.

To carry out its mission, the San Diego Youth Council will need to supplement its WIA funds with support from outside sources. The Youth Council intends to seek funding from foundations and local businesses.

For more information: *Marion Paul, Director of Youth Programs, San Diego Youth Council, c/o San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc., 1551 Fourth Avenue, Suite 600, San Diego, CA 92101; (619)744-0310; info@workforce.org; www.workforce.org*

These challenges can be overcome—and local practitioners and policymakers have good reason to move to coordinate and integrate school-to-work and WIA efforts, along with other youth programming. Overcoming traditional barriers between in-school and out-of-school youth programs and services will ultimately strengthen *all* youth initiatives. And coordination could help address concerns about sustaining school-to-work initiatives, even providing ways to support school-to-work partnerships beyond 2001, when the STWOA expires.

For local school-to-work partnerships, several strategies are available. For example, they can apply to serve as the local Youth Council or become the nucleus of an expanded, more comprehensive council. At the least, the partnership and council in a community should coordinate efforts.

The potential for integrated planning and partnerships will be greater for Youth Councils that choose the more ambitious path of creating a local youth-serving system for *all* youth, rather than limiting their vision to addressing the needs of only WIA-eligible youth. Councils taking this approach can benefit significantly from the strong linkages with employers and educators that many school-to-work partnerships have achieved—and can emerge as the local planning entity that can best coordinate and advocate for all the youth in a community.

Emerging Strategies

As briefly described in the boxes on these pages, the school-to-work partnerships in Philadelphia, Albuquerque, and San Diego have responded in different ways to the new

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Albuquerque: The Partnership Considers, Then Rejects, Becoming the Workforce Investment Board

The Middle Rio Grande Business and Education Collaborative (MRGBEC), which serves about one-third of New Mexico's population, has spent several months debating and deciding how it should respond to the Workforce Investment Act and its call for new Youth Councils. In May 1999, the MRGBEC Board of Directors decided unanimously to apply to become not just the Youth Council but the Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for a four-county region in and around Albuquerque.

After much consideration, though, the board decided that this strategy was inappropriate and infeasible. For now, MRGBEC intends to become more operational and less policy-oriented and to continue its efforts to organize business involvement with the region's schools and young people.

When MRGBEC formed in 1997, the local partnership decided to concentrate on school-too-career issues. However, many of its leaders felt that the collaborative should remain open to expanding beyond school-to-work into workforce development more generally. Indeed, the organization's name intentionally left that option open.

In early 1999, MRGBEC's board looked carefully at the possibility of becoming the Local Workforce Board for the region, and the board recommended such a course of action. However, the regional nature of the organization argued against MRGBEC's succeeding in winning WIB designation, which would require the approval of all four local county executives. In October, the board reversed its earlier recommendation.

MRGBEC then explored the possibility of becoming the Youth Council for the region. Instead, MRGBEC has decided to maintain its primary focus on school-to-work activities, moving more aggressively into operational activities, brokering and providing services that can help organize local employer involvement and support the school's efforts to prepare teachers and students for experiential learning outside the classroom. In the words of one board member, MRGBEC plans to become a more active intermediary in the region. A proposed new mission statement maintains the organization's broad vision: merging business and education to provide the region with an educated and employable workforce.

The MRGBEC board still believes that the workforce systems serving youth and adults should be linked. The organization's Web site holds out the vision of a "truly integrated workforce investment system that ensures a standards-based educational system, quality and accountability among service providers, and a seamless system for transitioning individuals through education to high-skilled, high-wage jobs with regional employers."[5] However, MRGBEC has decided that its best role in such a system is to support the local Youth Council and WIB by continuing and expanding initiatives that organize employers and schools toward this goal.

For more information: *Middle Rio Grande Business and Education Collaborative, Alvardo Square, MS 2119, Albuquerque, NM 87158-2119; Phone: (505)241-6566; mrgbec@nm.net; www.mrgbec.org.*

opportunity presented by the Workforce Investment Act and its Youth Councils. In Philadelphia, the school-to-work partnership is becoming the Youth Council and a new intermediary organization has been created that will, among its other responsibilities, staff the Youth Council. In San Diego, the local school-to-work partnership will fold into a more broadly representative Youth Council. In Albuquerque, after considering a very ambitious integration, the local partnership has decided to become more operational, expanding its connecting activities with businesses and schools while letting the Youth Council undertake more of the local policy and planning work.

These are not the only options. The local partnership could simply choose to coexist with the Youth Council, doing little to coordinate efforts. This would probably be the least advantageous option from the point-of-view

Useful Web Sites on the Workforce Investment Act and School-to-Career

www.intermediarynetwork.org: This is the Web site of the School-to-Work Intermediary Project, which is designed to strengthen and raise the public profile of local organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources. The Web site provides access to project research materials and implementation tools.

www.usworkforce.org: This web site is designed to provide answers to current and emerging questions about the Workforce Investment Act. It is a collaboration between public- and private-sector groups and individuals to provide access to workforce information and resources and to apply that information toward innovative and effective partnerships and programs.

www.stw.ed.gov: This is the Web site of the National School-to-Work Office Learning and Information Center. Since 1994, the center has worked with partnerships, practitioners, and the public at large. The National School-to-Work Office created the STW Learning Center to help stakeholders build successful school-to-work systems.

www.nyatep.org: "Youth Council Toolkit: Information and Options for Forming Youth Councils under the Workforce Investment Act" can be downloaded from the Web site of the New York State Association of Training and Employment Professionals. The association produced this toolkit to help communities design and create a Youth Council.

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project

The School-to-Work Intermediary Project is designed to strengthen and raise the public profile of local organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources.

www.intermediarynetwork.org

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of sustaining school-to-work efforts and enhancing the efficiency of local youth program planning. At the other extreme, the school-to-work partnership could disband and assume that the Youth Council will take over its role of addressing the needs of in-school youth as well as WIA-eligible young people. This route may be more efficient, but without pressure on the council to embrace all youth as its focus, some of the progress made by local school-to-work initiatives is likely to dissipate: the Youth Council would respond to its first charge, to assist the Workforce Board plan for WIA implementation.

Philadelphia, San Diego, and Albuquerque have started on their own paths toward a common goal: the creation of workforce development systems with strong employer participation that involve all young people. How these and other strategies play out will emerge gradually in the months to come, as will lessons about the best ways for school-to-work partnerships and Youth Councils to relate to one another. Jobs for the Future and its partners in the School to Work Intermediary Project will continue to monitor and report on the evolving patterns of how local partnerships and Youth Councils interact—and on the pros and cons of different strategies.

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[1] Jim Callahan and Marion Pines, "WIA Youth Policy Councils: Key to the Future for a Generation of Challenge," Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, July 1999, p. 21-22.

[2] Thirty percent of WIA youth funds must be spent on out-of-school youth.

[3] All three communities are sites in the School-to-Work Intermediary Project, a national effort to strengthen and raise the public profile of local organizations that connect schools, workplaces, and other community resources.

[4] Callahan and Pines, p. 43.

[5] "Workforce Investment Board," Middle Rio Grande Business and Education Collaborative, 7 August 1999, www.mrgbec.org/news/menu3.asp (30 July 1999).

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